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INTRODUCTION IVOR MONTAGU

CATALOGUE

AN EXHIBITION AT THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM
SEPT 26TH NOV 10TH

DRAWINGS

EISENSTEIN

PRESENTED BY
THE FRIENDS OF THE
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

[1963]

CATALOGUE

AN EXHIBITION AT THE
VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM
SEPT 20TH–NOV 30TH

DRAWINGS

EISENSTEIN

PRESENTED BY
THE FRIENDS OF THE
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

NTRODUCTION

IVOR MONTAGUE

S. M. Eisenstein died suddenly 10 February, 1948. He was found by his colleagues next morning sitting at his desk in his library. A thesis, unfinished, on colour and three-dimensional film was before him, and beside it lay open the Marxist classics on which it was his custom to draw for illustrative quotations in his philosophical work. Thus the cinema had lost its most brilliant intellect. His theoretical contribution was deeply original and stretched far beyond the confines of the film form, defining basic scientific laws for general aesthetics. His practical achievement included films that literally shook the world.

A brief biography: Sergei Eisenstein died comparatively early. He was only fifty. He was no more than twenty-seven when he directed the picture *Battleship Potemkin* which at one and the same time lifted the cinema from the realm of passive entertainment, or the sphere of subjective self-expression and minor decorative art, to the role of direct agent in the world's affairs, and established a planetary reputation for the young Soviet film industry.

He was born in Riga, of Jewish descent. At the time of the Revolution he was a nineteen-year-old architectural student. Family? Of the father, who must himself have been a fountain of the special brand of Eisenstein humour, I know only what S.M.E. told me: namely, that whenever *Fledermaus* visited the then provincial capital, his father used to engage the entire front row of the stalls, fill it with his friends, and enjoy hugely the chorus – 'Eisenstein has gone to quod, gone to quod, gone to quod!' His mother, everyone knows who has seen *Potemkin*. She is the old lady who hands up the goose to the battleship in the sequence of solidarity between shore and sailors.

In Moscow, the student became associated with the Theatre of the Red Army, a show of topical vaudeville skits in which the young Kazak, G. V. Alexandrov – assistant director on *Potemkin* and raised to co-director credit on the next two pictures – performed as acrobat. Eduard Kasimirovich Tisse, son of a Swedish sea-captain, literally farthest-sighted human being and most wonderful exterior cameraman in the world, was making newsreels. The three young men got together on Eisenstein's first film *Strike* and stayed together a long time.

In 1925 came *Potemkin*. It lasts fifty minutes, but it is doubtful whether any other film has ever made such a noise in the world, or ever will. Already the grandiosity of S.M.E.'s conceptions, which led to so many unrealized masterpieces during his career, was in evidence. *Potemkin* was originally conceived as an episode, perhaps only a single reel, in the epic *1905*. It outgrew its scenario. This film, whose tiniest details dovetail so perfectly that it can be logically analysed post-factum to an almost infinite degree, is itself the most perfect example of a creation

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in which the creative process continued alive long after scripting and through every stage of realization. Even the exquisite mist shots were extempore, Tisse making immortal art of what to many another photographic expert would have seemed merely a prohibitive calamity.

Then came the *General Line* (shown in U.S.S.R. as *The Old and the New*). Its theme was the struggle for collectivisation of agriculture. It took three years to make. When it was finished the political Bureau of the C.P.S.U. saw it, and Eisenstein often told me of the deep impression Stalin's opinion left with him. So long had passed that new aspects had assumed importance in the solution of the problems, and an extra reel was added.

But meanwhile, in 1927, had been made a superb, magnificent squib *October* (called abroad *Ten Days that Shook the World*). Work on the farm film was interrupted and the Revolution picture, which had to be ready for the Tenth Anniversary of the Revolution, was rushed through in a few weeks of days and nights, the three doping themselves to stay awake. Pudovkin made a Festival film, too, *The End of St. Petersburg*. 'I bombarded the Winter Palace from the "Aurora" ', says Pudovkin, 'while Eisenstein bombarded it from the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul. One night I knocked away part of the balustrading of the roof, and was scared I might get into trouble, but, luckily enough, that same night Sergei Mikhailovich broke 200 windows in private bedrooms.' Those were the days!

After the *General Line*, Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse, set out for the West. Abroad, sound-film was coming in. At home, the Five Year Plan, wherein quantitative expansion was planned rather than large-scale qualitative change. By going abroad, they could lose little time, and stay up-to-date. So with a blessing, 25 dollars each, and a year's leave, the young men were released upon the world their films had shaken.

I well remember their first impact upon the rather staid Avant-Garde Conference in the Swiss castle of La Sarraz. Three strange figures dressed from head to foot in blue zipper boiler suits. In less than no time, the highly Grande Dame chatelaine charmed and overborne, all the castle arms and armour were out on the lawn and the delegates were engaged, under direction of Eisenstein and Hans Richter, in the practical film exercise of storming the castle, in whose topmost turret, under guard of the commercial cinema personated by a university lecturer in English literature, was prisoned *Film Art* incarnated by a languishing French lady film critic, clad in a white nightdress, perilously chained with unwound and inflammable film reels, and wearing two huge breastplates made out of their spools.

After a hopeless effort to find financial backing in France for a film version of Albert London's *Road to Buenos Aires* ('the impresarios are sure to insist on casting their ladies and these will be so *suitable*', pleaded S.M.E.), Eisenstein came to London. While Eisenstein lectured to classes organized by the Film Society, Alexandrov directed a vulgar little sound musical *Romance Sentimentale* and Tisse made in Switzerland a film designed originally to be pro-abortion propaganda, but which, when its sponsor found censors unsympathetic, was simply turned into its opposite by changing in each reel its beginning.

Finally, they followed me to Hollywood with a Paramount contract. We set up house: with an excellent she-cook, half Negro, quarter Red Indian and quarter Irish. There is no space for one hundredth of our adventures our comradeship with Charlie; the Academy meeting at which Hollywood heard, for the first time, from Eisenstein what a close-up is really for; the part when the journalist asked Eisenstein 'Do people ever laugh in the Soviet Union?' and S.M.E. replied: 'They will, when I tell them about this party'; the conference at which Goldwyn told us (he really did) how much he admired *Potemkin* and could Eisenstein do him something on the same lines, but a *leetle* cheaper, for Ronald Colman!

S.M.E.'s first plan – a contemporary American story set in a house of glass – wouldn't jell. None of us, nor any of the American writers working with us, could get going on it. Out of *Sutter's Gold* we were manoeuvred by internal studio politics. Then *An American Tragedy*. We knew we could never do it. But the choice was first. This classic was impossible for *us*, because the theme that not the murderer but his environment (in this the moral values of American society itself) is responsible for the murder. Perhaps others could burke such a theme. But where our consciences reside, we were not elastic. A campaign of vilification of us as 'Red Dogs' had been growing in Hollywood ever since S.M.E.'s arrival. It was taken up by a Congressman named Fish just as our script was completed. One day (before it was finished, maybe), it was acclaimed as the greatest ever written in the studio; the next it was read and we were out on our ears. I verily believe that before the Paramount moguls read that theme in all the mighty power of Eisenstein's script they had not even any idea what the subject was about. To them it had been – just another well-known story property.

Then Eisenstein had a choice of a film in Japan, a film in Mexico with Upton Sinclair's help. I will not reopen old sores. Suffice it that in my view neither S.M.E. nor Sinclair – though each blamed the other

was really at fault in what happened. The disaster was inevitable. But what must have been a masterpiece was taken away to be finished by others' hands.

Back in the U.S.S.R., S.M.E. was heartbroken and for long confined himself to lecturing in the film college. Grisha Alexandrov diverted to an independent career as director of comedy musicals. A Soviet Film Jubilee, with top-honours for almost everyone else and a reported dictum of Stalin (I'm damned if the Old Man[1] gets anything until he wakes up and does some work again'), shook him into activity. There followed the abortive *Bezhin Meadow*, twice started and twice stopped, culminating in the grand assault of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. on Eisenstein as a formalist, egotist and what have you, and every word of it just, as spoken of S.M.E. in his mood of that time.

He was 'punished' with a long holiday in one of the most exquisite spots of the whole U.S.S.R., choice of next subject, the greatest Soviet composer as musician, the co-director of the finest Soviet sound-film as coadjutor, and unlimited resources for the next film, the simple, unprofound, but flowing and lovely pageant opera *Alexander Nevsky*. Then, what I feel confident was an elaborate leg-pull of the Moscow highbrows – production of a Wagner opera in the Bolshoi Theatre. Then the war. In the first weeks he used his knowledge of England to help with adapting M.O.I. films for their Soviet audiences. Then he went to Central Asia and produced the first part of his monumental *Ivan the Terrible*. The finishing of the second part coincided with a stroke. After a slow recovery in the Kremlin hospital he learned that the film had been listed, with two others, as giving a false impression of history (its historicity was, in fact, only a bit better than Shakespeare's, i.e., not 100 per cent. by any means). Another long and serious talk with Stalin followed, and S.M.E. was engaged in recasting Part II and preparing a Part III, when he died.

As a pedagogue and scientist? He was a man of vast erudition. He not only read but could write and lecture in French, German, Spanish, English as well as Russian. He read voraciously. He marked marginally everything he read, from novels to sociology, with film notes. He acquired so many books, his flat was so full of them piled on the floor and piled so high, that if he wanted to consult one he had to go out and buy another copy; searching for it at home was useless. He was constantly drawing: caricatures of his interlocutors, fanciful figures, sometimes naughty ones, but also, exactly and imaginatively, what he wanted either to film or to explain. A pupil who heard him and whose imagination was not [illegible] Eisenstein's nickname, even as a youngster.

nourished forever must be a dull one. Those who listened to his London lectures include almost every young English director, of a certain generation, who has since proved himself.

A creature of fantastic energy, he was also fantastically lazy. So many plans, schemes, ideas, were chasing themselves around in his mind that often he would reject all of them. But when the undertaking was launched, then he rested no hour of day or night, applying himself to the limit, with a terrible concentration. He was forever promising to assemble his lecture notes, but never getting round to it. There was always something more important.

His great and peculiar contribution? The application of Dialectical Materialism to aesthetics, the theory of novel creation by conflicts. To state it in simplest terms: in art as in nature the interaction of *a* and *b* do not make $a + b$ or even *ab*, but *c*. He followed and traced out this process through countless phases of film making, and of artistic creation in other fields, and showed the construction of artistic effects following the same dialectical laws as process in nature. He first derived these ideas from a study of editing, but recognized – following his combat over the formalism of *Bezhin Meadow* – that in doing so he had assigned a hypertrophied significance to editing, and that when he sought the application of the same principles in every creative phase, not only in the inter-shot creation, but in the intra-shot, in the composition of the single frame, in the construction of the narrative and in the shaping of the actor's performance as well, the content was immensely strengthened and enriched.

Jo Sternberg sought to belittle S.M.E. in Hollywood by calling him the greatest writer on films and a substantially less director. This was, of course, mere pitiful jealousy, as is neatly and objectively established by the trivial job which, in due course, Jo made of *American Tragedy* after the 'Red Dogs' had been safely sacked. Eisenstein's extremely difficult writings would carry scant authority, would indeed have been scarcely read or even noticed, if they had not been the conclusions of a man who had made films so devastatingly powerful that mighty states trembled at the prospect of allowing them to be shown within their borders. In twenty-three years – from 1925 to 1948 – S.M.E. completed only five films, but each is a masterpiece – not, certainly, a universal masterpiece in the sense in which a work by Shakespeare or the great humanist novelists is universal – but each containing such perfect passages of expression that it must inevitably be studied and admired not only so long as the medium of film deals with similar problems in similar ways, but for its vivid content. And when they

are listed: *Potemkin*, *General Line*, *Nevsky*, *Ivan*, something else remarkable in its elucidation of Eisenstein as a person and as a Soviet citizen emerges. Each picturises with extraordinary force, and epic majesty, perhaps what was *the* vital aspect of experience; revolt against oppression; 'coordinated and triumphant revolution; solution of the agrarian problem; patriotic defence against aggression'; consolidation of the threatened state – fascinating the whole Soviet people at the time that it was made. Beside this capacity to express the soul of a people, the formal ingenuities seem dwarfed.

But none the less the formal achievements present an extraordinary list. There is the achievement of realism by subjugation of real material.[1] (It is interesting to note that Eisenstein came to films through his search for realism; he tried to produce *Strike* as a play, but in a factory instead of a theatre, and tried film when he found this futile.) There is the profound usage of visual rhythms to produce tensions and excitement (fortified by an encyclopaedic study of the ecstasies of the saints, by the way). There is dialectical montage (the transformation of quality into quantity), *General Line*; ideological montage, *October*; the relationship of music and movement, *Nevsky*; of subtle movements and speech intonations, *Ivan*. This recital might go on and on for pages. And withal an extraordinary genius in plastic composition.

What sort of a man was Eisenstein beneath the exterior of the being whose dome-like brow, exaggerated by deep-set extraordinarily acute eyes and a massive quiff, was so exaggerated that it seemed a sort of physical pose? Vain. Shy. A snob (intellectual). A [illegible] interests embraced everything and everyone. A gamin capable of almost feminine malice, yet much too big to cherish any personal grudge. An egotist. Yet utterly loyal to his friendships and to his social and artistic faith.

I can see Eisenstein now – playing lawn tennis a little uncertainly in braces, but comforted by any amount that so used likewise an English Lord Chancellor, smoking a cigar besides. I can see him teaching Charlie Chaplin a wicked swearword in Russian (the meaning of which Charlie did not know), to shout from the window as our car drove past an elegant restaurant run by exiled Grand Dukes and Duchesses on Hollywood Boulevard.

It is with twinkling eyes that Eisenstein is best remembered. He was one of those fine human beings whom the superficial think cynical, but who really, with seeing the comedy in everything, never abate their faith that existence is worth while and progress worth contributing to, and their integrity in making their own contribution to the utmost of their best.

He had been warned to go easy. He had been told not to work hard. But how can one not do what every fibre of one's being calls out for one to do, because one can? His Soviet colleagues have written an epitaph for him that he died at his post. He was not an ordinary character. He was quite an odd sort of character, which is one way of saying he was exceptional. But this son of the U.S.S.R., this product of the living Marxist tradition, is one whom all of us who work in films may be proud to have numbered in our ranks.

IVOR MONTAGU

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[1] Through *Drifters* and Grierson, ancestral to the whole English documentary school.

HOW I LEARNED TO DRAW

SERGEI M. EISENSTEIN

To begin with, I never actually got down to learning how to draw. Here is how I draw and why.

It is to the engineer Afrosimov that I owe my irresistible itch for drawing. Because Mr Afrosimov was drawing for me! On the dark blue cloth of the card table, with a well sharpened stick of chalk in a yellowish wrapping spangled with tiny stars, while waiting for a game.

He was drawing animals for me. Dogs, deer, cats. Very distinctly do I remember the acme of my delight: a fat, squatting frog. The white, sharply delineated contour stood out against the dark blue background. This 'technique' allows of no shadings and illusory shadows. Only a sheer contour! Nor was it only an outline done in many strokes. Here, the line of the contour originated and moved on to the delight of the spectator. Ever in motion, the line ran along the invisible contour of an object, magically compelling it into existence on the dark blue cloth. The line was the voice of motion!

Years later, I was to remember the piercing thrill of the line as dynamic movement, as a process, and a route.

Many years later it compelled me to inscribe in my heart the wise precept of Wang Pi (3rd century B.C.): 'What is a line – a line speaks of movement'.

Enraptured, I would study the seemingly dust-dry Cartesian analytic geometry at the Institute of Civil Engineering, for it spoke about the movement of lines expressed in mysterious formulae.

I would devote many years to the *mise-en-scène:* these lines of the actors' paths through time!

The dynamics of lines and of 'becoming' and not of 'remaining' in both the lines and the system of phenomena and their transition into each other have always been my ruling passion.

The same source, probably, gave rise to my predilection and sympathy for the teachings proclaiming dynamics, motion, and becoming as their basic principles.

At the other end of the scale, I will never cease to love Disney and his heroes, from Mickey Mouse to Billy the Whale, for their agile figures are also linear animals of a kind, without chiaroscuro, like the early creations of the Chinese and the Japanese, all fleeting contours. The fleeting lines of childhood, delineating the contours of the animals have here come to life again in the realistic voice of outlines of the animated cartoons.

And perhaps it is also because of those childhood impressions that I have been constantly chalking on the blackboard with such gusto, engrossing and amusing my students, and trying to make them see the line as a movement, as a dynamic process.

That is probably why the purely linear drawing remains my favourite, and why I use hardly any other.

Chiaroscuro (in the sketches intended for embodiment on the screen) is indicated within them almost like records of the desired effects.

It was thus that Van Gogh merely wrote the name of the colour on the spot where he wanted it to be in the sketches he enclosed in the letters to his brother.

Still, it was not Van Gogh who took possession of me at that time – incidentally, was it not the linear virility of his strokes and the unsmudged clarity of their flight that prompted my first sympathies for him?

Van Gogh was still invisible and unknown to me then.

At first, it was the healthy influence, the naked contour of Olaf Gulbransson's drawings.[1] And mountains of graphic tripe and trash like the dry PAM[2] in the newspaper 'Vecherneye Vremya' and the collection of caricatures entitled 'The War and PAM' which was especially famous during the First World War and which was full of dull Wilhelms tempting me in vain to follow suit.

At that time, too, I fell under the spell of the 'folk caricatures' by Moor.[3] Here, I had a certain sensation of shading and contour, and quite frequently there was the 'colour wash' of the surface delineated by these contours.

At that period I drew awfully much and awfully badly, attempting to emphasize my originally correct source of inspiration by a series of low-calibre samples, and by the 'peredvizhniki's' passion for 'genre' instead of the 'zealot's' search for form[4] (which I took up with the same zest somewhat later in the 'theatre period' of my life).

For one reason or another, I still did not get down to learning how to draw. And when I did begin attending the 'plaster of Paris', 'tea-pots', and 'mask of Dante' classes at school, I got nowhere. And here it turns out that my recollections of my first dancing lessons are much more appropriate than might seem.

[1] Olaf Gulbransson is a modern Norwegian artist and political cartoonist.

[2] PAM – P. P. Matyunin, a Russian cartoonist.

[3] D. S. Moor (Orlov) 1883–1946, a Soviet artist and famous political cartoonist.

[4] An untranslatable play of words. The Russian word 'peredvizhniki' (the genre trend in Russian painting which derived its name from the itinerant society of artist, as the group called itself at first) and the Russian word 'podvizhniki' (zealots) are similar in sound.

Or rather, not the lessons so much as my complete inaptitude in this field.

I have not been able to dance a waltz to this day, though I dashed off a foxtrot in the most Negroid manner imaginable, and of all places, in Harlem. And quite recently, too, I danced myself into a myocardial infract which laid me up for months.

What is the mystery of this, and where, the connection?

Drawing and dancing have, of course, sprung from the same seed, for they are merely two varieties of the same impulse.

Much later, after giving up my drawing and returning to it – the Paradise of Graphic Art Lost and Regained (which is what happened to me in Mexico) – I had the honour of receiving the first (and only) press comment on my pictorial talent.

This is how it happened and why.

As I have said, I resumed drawing in Mexico. But first I ought to tell how I dropped my drawing. In the traditional linear manner.

This was due not so much to the influence of Diego Rivera who drew in dense and intermittent strokes, and not in my endeared 'mathematical' line capable of the whole gamut of expression which it attains only through a varying pace of continuous outlines.

In my earlier film efforts I also favoured the mathematically pure course of the director's line much more than the 'dense stroke' of the emphasized film shot.

My infatuation with the film shot came later, strange as it may seem (but then it is quite consistent and natural: remember how Engels put it – 'It is first the movement that catches the attention, and then that which moves!').

And this happened to me precisely in Mexico where the drawing went through the stage of inner purification in its striving for a mathematically abstract and pure line.

The effect is especially telling when extremely sensual relations of human figures, especially in some sophisticated and extraordinary situations, are depicted through the medium of an abstract, 'intellectualized' line.

(Especially pronounced sensualism combined with the ability for the most abstract thinking is regarded by Bardèche and Brasillach as the hallmark of my creative profile, which is very flattering and suits me perfectly. See 'Histoire du cinéma.')

I repeat that the influence here was due not so much to Diego Rivera, though he had to some degree synthesized all the varieties of Mexican primitivism, from the bas-reliefs of the Chichen Itsi, through the primitive toys and ornamentation of utensils, to Jose Guadalupe Posada's inimitable illustrations to the street songs.

It was rather the influence of those samples of primitive art which I avidly touched, saw, and visited for fourteen [illegible]ths. Even more striking, probably, was the linear harmony of the amazing purity of the Mexican landscape, the square, white apparel of the peons, and the circles of their sombreros or 'dorador' felt hats. In it as it may, I did a lot of drawing in Mexico. Stopping over at New York, I met the owner of the Baker Gallery (I believe that was the name).

He grew interested in my drawings and asked me to leave them with him. They were nightmarish enough in their subjects; for example: the 'series' of Salome drinking from a straw dipped between the lips of the beheaded John the Baptist.

In two colours – with two pencils.

There was also a 'suite' on the theme of the bull fight interwoven with the theme of St. Sebastian in the most intricate combinations.

Now it was the martyrdom of the matador, and now of the bull.

There was even a drawing of a crucified bull pierced by arrows like St. Sebastian.

This was not my fault.

This was Mexico mixing Christ's blood of the Mass in the cathedral with the streams of the bull's blood in the afternoon corrida in the city arena into the one element of the Sunday holiday; while the tickets to the bull fight were graced with the image of the Madonna de Guadalupe whose quater-centenary was marked not only by thousands of pilgrimages and scores of South American cardinals in scarlet robes, but also by especially sumptuous bull fights 'to the glory de la madre de Dios'.

In short, the drawings aroused the curiosity of Mr Baker (or was he Mr Brown?).

And when the ill-starred, emasculated version of 'Que Viva Mexico' had been converted into the pitiful jumble of 'Thunder Over Mexico' by someone's profane hands, the enterprising Yankee exhibited these drawings in a side lobby of a theatre.

That is how the note about my drawings found its way into the newspapers. And one drawing was even sold. I actually received the money: fifteen dollars.

If I ever find this yellowed clipping – the only notice about me as a graphic artist – in the piles of cinematographic publicity, I shall certainly insert it at this spot. But I remember the chief thing in it, just the thing I need for this spot. A sentence about the 'lightness' with which they were dashed on paper as if I had 'danced through the lot of them.' The drawing and the dance growing from the same seed of a single impulse are here entwined. And the lines of my drawing were read as the figures of a dance.

SERGEI EISENSTEIN

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Eisenstein's Drawings, Moscow 19[illegible]

THE DRAWINGS

THE DRAWINGS

Eisenstein sketched constantly. He threw off little drawings on any scrap of paper that came to hand – letter-heads, forms, theatre programmes, pamphlets. These sketches, he used to say, were his 'creative workshop'. 'They are pictorial shorthand notes and lay no claim to be anything else.' Yuri Pimenov, more vividly, has called the drawings 'running starts for his thoughts'; and since Eisenstein's thoughts were more worth knowing than those of most men, the drawings have an intense interest from this point of view alone. He never intended them as works of art in their own right, or for exhibition. All the same he preserved them – thousands of them – over the years, which is why the present exhibition has been made possible.

This selection of some three hundred drawings reveals him as an accomplished, assured, stylish draughtsman. He enjoyed playing with *pastiche* styles; but through these *pastiches* he was always enriching his own graphic possibilities. He draws self-portraits in the style of oriental prints 'Idiot's Delight – Alma-Ata' (203), 'in the Jap's queer manner' (205), in the style of a Mexican rock-hieroglyph (206). He parodies Daumier (201), Gauguin (202), de Chirico (200). He sketches in the style of Persian miniatures (222–4). His best cartoons share some of Lautrec's manner and quality, deriving from the same sort of clarity of vision and from the accuracy of the draughtsmanship which conveys these qualities. Eisenstein himself, in the essay reprinted in this pamphlet, has written the best appreciation of this draughtsmanship – the conscious preference for a two-dimensional, linear style which was confirmed by his artistic experiences in Mexico; his confidence in the 'dynamism of lines'.

It is characteristic of Eisenstein's quality as a graphic artist that he most enjoyed the exercise of distilling a whole essence into a deceptively simple cartoon. 'Maeterlinck' (207) is a delicious summing-up of a concept of blue whimsy; 'Ibsen' (208) of a socio-dramatic context; 'Ballet' (209) of a specific area and period in theatrical art.

The first group of drawings exhibited (1–34) illustrates Eisenstein's work in the theatre, over a period of twenty years, from the end of the Civil War to 1940. (There are also two costume designs (30–1) dated 1944, which show that he was still dreaming of a production of Richard III). The earliest sketches (1–2), juvenile in style but spirited in content, were probably made in his early days at the Proletcult Theatre, under Valeri Pletnyev. His first production there was Jack London's *The Mexican*, and the six designs included in the exhibition (3–8) reveal something of the experimental gaiety, the carefree borrowing from sources as different as circus, cubism and constructivism, of those times. The designs for his 1921 production of Macbeth reveal at once his keen interest in modern art movements, and his admiration for Gordon Craig (11–12). (*Macbeth* continued to fascinate Eisenstein it seems; two designs of 1936 (9–10) show him still pondering the play.) Other production designs from the Proletcult period include those for *Puss in Boots* (1922) (13–14), *The Kidnapper* (1922) (15–18) and for some burlesques, including, most enchantingly, *More Kindness to Horses!* (1921) (25). The two splendid designs for *Heartbreak House* (1922) (19–20) recall Eisenstein's stimulating if abortive collaboration with Meyerhold.

The latest theatre designs actually realized are four for *Die Walküre* which Eisenstein produced at the Bolshoi Theatre in 1940 (21–4; see also the programme in case A). Among these the most curious is the drawing (21) inscribed, in obvious homage to Leonardo, 'note and do not forget that the dynamism of the movement of a flying horse and its phantom likeness is got by the absence of it's (sic) hindparts. See for that the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" by Albrecht Dürer'.

This self-conscious search for *dynamism* in his two-dimensional line-drawings becomes particularly relevant when we come to the second group of drawings – the sketches in which he planned his films that had also to be conceived in the terms of two practical dimensions. If Eisenstein ever drew any preliminary and working sketches for his silent films – *Strike*, *The Battleship Potemkin*, *October* and *The General Line* – none have survived. Some of the drawings in the third part of the exhibition may obliquely refer to unrealized projects; 'Tamerlane's Tower' (210) although it is a classroom sketch is almost certainly related to Eisenstein's grandiose scheme for *Ferghana Canal* referred to in the letter exhibited in case (A). No drawings seem to refer to the ill-fated production of *Bezhin Meadow* (1935–6). Only when we come to his completed sound films *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and *Ivan the Terrible* (1942–6) do we arrive at those extraordinary series of sketches which

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provide at once such a vivid revelation of the film-director's work and of the specific methods of one of the most complete artists ever to have chosen the cinema as his medium.

It is not, at second glance, surprising that these films are minutely planned on paper while the earlier ones (apparently) were not. These last films were historical, costume pictures, epic achievements of *mise-en-scène*. The earlier films had contemporary or nearly contemporary subjects, and were shot, in the manner of documentaries, on location. Ivor Montagu, speaking of the mists in *Potemkin*, has described the part accident could play in the earlier films. In *Alexander* and *Ivan*, where every swirl of a cloak, every foot-fall or blink, is premeditated and calculated, there is no room for accident.

These drawings would repay the student's minutest study, alongside the scripts and finished films. All we can point out here is that they so particularly plot the film that Prokofiev was able to undertake to score *Nevsky* after merely seeing the drawings. Costumes and settings, make-ups and coiffures, but also montages and shots and movements within each shot are all worked out on paper. The drawings point up distinctions of style between the films. The sketches for *Alexander Nevsky* (35–74) tend to emphasize movement; those for the three parts of *Ivan* (75–105; 106–131; 132–151) tend more to stress the formal and statuesque qualities of the film. It is fascinating to compare the dates, which Eisenstein so carefully recorded on every drawing; and see how often he would return to a particular detail: the five drawings (140–4) which develop the *mise-en-scène* of Ivan's apostrophe in Part III ('You are silent, oh Lord!') cover a period of weeks, for instance.

The drawings should also be viewed in relation to Eisenstein's own description of the way he used them:

> 'On scraps of paper you jot down a snatch of dialogue or the disposition of the characters on the flagstones, or "instructions to the artist" about the rounded-off edges of the vaulted ceiling, or . . . a note "to the director" about the rhythm of an as yet unwritten scene, or "considerations to be submitted to the composer" about the four component *leitmotifs* to enhance the character of Ivan the Terrible himself, or "suggestions to the poet" about the nature of the droll ballad and stanzas that the future Foma and Yeryoma are to sing.
>
> 'Or suddenly discarding all words and outlines, the scraps of paper fill feverishly with drawings.
>
> 'Without a definite view of the motion, the action, and groupings it is impossible to register human behaviour on paper.
>
> 'There they are roaming about continuously.
>
> 'Sometimes they seem so tangible that one feels one could draw them on paper with eyes shut.
>
> 'None of them are destined to face the camera for a year, two and even three.
>
> 'But one tries to record the essentials on paper.
>
> 'And the result is a series of drawings.
>
> 'These are not illustrations for the scenario; and still less, illuminations for books.
>
> 'At times, they represent the first, fleeting, impression of a scene to be copied and recorded in scenario form later on.
>
> 'At times they represent a poor substitute for the possibility to glimpse the behaviour of the nascent characters at this early stage.
>
> 'At times, they are the quintessence of the reactions to be provoked by the scene in question, and more frequently, just searching.
>
> 'Such infinite searchings as changing the scene, the sequence of the episodes, and the remarks within the episodes again and again, twenty times over, if necessary.
>
> 'Sometimes the scene to be filmed in the future may have nothing to do with these initial conceptions.
>
> 'At times, this scene appears to be a draft of two years ago, suddenly come alive.
>
> 'At times, this scene may be left out of the scenario with a heap of other notes.
>
> 'At times, the scene may be omitted from the script along with the whole act.
>
> 'But at times, these sketches yield the clue to rigorous pointers for the construction of the scenes.
>
> 'At times, they suggest this or that trait of make-up or outline of costume.
>
> 'At times, they re-create the pattern of the future film shot.
>
> 'At times, they seem to be the precepts of the actor's future movement through space.
>
> 'These sketches are the least finished, the most evanescent and the most esoteric.'

If for one reason only we should treasure these sketches: they are all that remain, apart from the scenario, to tell us what the third part of Eisenstein's epic *Ivan the Terrible* would have been.

* * *

Eisenstein's graphic style suddenly matured dramatically, shaking off all the affectations of the early theatre designs, about 1930. He has described the effect upon him of contact with Mexican art and the Mexican scene. It is still more apparent in the sketches he made at this time (152–82). These are included in the film

group of the exhibition – drawings not directly related to theatre or cinema – because, though they record the same scenes and people as he was filming for the ill-fated *Que Viva Mexico!* only one drawing (152) refers directly to a film composition.

This final group of drawings continues with a selection of some hundred or more sketches made for his own and his friends' entertainment during the last twenty years of his life. Mostly they are comic, for Eisenstein's mischievous gaiety seemed nearly inexhaustible. There are caricatures of himself (203–6; 211–13), and of his friends, including Ivor Montagu (214) and Sergei Prokofiev, who was scribbled on the programme of the concert at which he was conducting the world première of his Fifth Symphony (215).

Eisenstein's malice finds its most vigorous outlet in sly social comments whose acidity sometimes recalls George Grosz. He enjoys sexual equivocations like 'Good Advice' (216), 'Gigolo' (217), 'Madame's Caprice' (218), 'Tender Baby' (219). Generosity, too, a humanist's impatience with hypocrisy, is apparent in such a drawing as *The Sinner* (220). Sometimes these observations are set in the nineteenth century, in homage to Eisenstein's admired Daumier. (Cf. 'Uncle and Niece', no. 221).

His erotic drawings could be simply bawdy ('Point d'Interrogation, 225) or they could be romantically idyllic, like 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' (226) and the series of 'Couples' (227–8). Or, deliciously, they could be both idyllic and bawdy, as in 'To Touch or not to Touch' (229). Closely associated with the erotic drawings are a series of lyrical personations of mythological and symbolic figures – the elegant 'Artist' (230), the sexy, wistful, witty fauns (231–2), the delicate Poseidon (233–4), Dionysus (235) and the rest.

Above all these drawings are *theatrical*; and by extension, Eisenstein loved to draw theatrical figures – acrobats, dancers and circus folk. Towards the end of the exhibition comes the enchanting series of clowns thrown off between 1942 and 1944 (236–8) when the artist was hard at work on *Ivan*, unwillingly removed from the war to remote Alma-Ata. In these drawings, in their comedy and *joie de vivre*, we are able to perceive what is, perhaps, the outstanding quality of Eisenstein's graphic work. He drew for and with pleasure. And the drawings still return that pleasure.

* * *

Among the related material exhibited alongside the drawings, the most significant is perhaps the whimsical poster for Eisenstein's production of Ostrovsky's *Enough Simplicity in Every Wise Man* (34) at the Proletcult Theatre in 1922. For this production, as the poster intimates, Eisenstein shot a brief, silly film, which was the introduction to his legendary career in the cinema.

The scripts, programmes, posters, manuscripts and cuttings reflect the hopes and disappointments of his later career. There are posters and programmes for the silent films (B), and Eisenstein's montage list for *October* (B). There are photostats of his treatments for *Sutter's Gold* (B) and *An American Tragedy* (B) to recall the disappointments of the American visit. There is a special issue of the Mosfilm journal in which the director expresses the high hopes he had for *Bezhin Meadow* (B), which were so soon to be dashed. And finally there is a wonderfully revealing series of letters and telegrams (B) to his American friend and pupil, Jay Leyda. He speaks of his plans, and confides his depression. He lays schemes for publishing his writings in the United States. Above all, and especially in the later, sick days of his life, he demands books. He wants to know the latest about Western art and literature and pictures; he wants books on photography, on films, on art; books by Dali, Melville and Steinberg. He never lost the curiosity of a genius.

DAVID ROBINSON

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